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UNCLAS ROME 003175

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DRL/CRA FOR ACTION, DRL/IRF, DRL/PHD/ EUR/WE, EUR/RA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM KIRF IT EUN

SUBJECT: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT - ITALY FACTUAL UPDATE

REF: A. STATE 77941

B. ROME 2473

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1. (U) PER INSTRUCTIONS (REF A), EMBASSY ROME SUBMITS TWO FACTUAL UPDATES TO ITS PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED (REF B) 2002 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM (IRF) REPORT. BOTH UPDATES INVOLVE SECTION II ("STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM"), SUBSECTION "LEGAL/POLICY FRAMEWORK."

2. (SBU) 1ST FACTUAL UPDATE: PARAS 3 AND 4 (OF 2001 IRF REPORT), LAST SENTENCE: SUBSTITUTE COMPLICATED VICE SET BACK. THE SENTENCE WILL THEN READ: DIVISIONS AMONG THE COUNTRY'S MUSLIM ORGANIZATIONS, AS WELL AS ITS MULTIPLE MUSLIM IMMIGRANT GROUPS, COMPLICATED THAT COMMUNITY'S EFFORTS TO SEEK AN INTESA. COMMENT: DEVELOPMENTS BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE PARLIAMENT IN JUNE QUICKENED THE PACE OF ACTIVITY THAT COULD LEAD TO A GOI-MUSLIM COMMUNITY INTESA.

3. (SBU) 2ND FACTUAL UPDATE: PARA 6:

- DELETE OLD 2ND, 3RD, AND 4TH SENTENCES (WHICH INVOLVE 1999 AND 2000 MATERIAL).  
- FOLLOW WITH OLD 7TH SENTENCE (BUT PLEASE CORRECT "PRESIDENT CARLO CIAMPI" TO READ: PRESIDENT CARLO AZEGLIO CIAMPI), THEN ADD THE FOLLOWING: RESPONDING TO THE POPE'S JANUARY 2002 CALL FOR CATHOLIC JURISTS TO BOYCOTT DIVORCE CASES, JUSTICE MINISTER ROBERTO CASTELLI HIGHLIGHTED THAT JUDGES CANNOT EXERCISE "CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION" IN DISCHARGING THEIR DUTIES. IN JUNE 2002, PARLIAMENT PASSED A VATICAN-INSPIRED, RESTRICTIVE ASSISTED FERTILITY BILL THAT DREW SUPPORT FROM CATHOLIC LEGISLATORS ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM (AND WHICH SECULAR CONSERVATIVES AND COMMUNISTS JOINED TO OPPOSE).  
- FOLLOW WITH OLD 5TH AND 6TH SENTENCES, THEN ADD THE FOLLOWING: ATTEMPTS BY INDIVIDUAL TEACHERS TO REMOVE  
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CRUCIFIXES FROM THE CLASSROOM, IN DEFERENCE TO MUSLIM STUDENTS, NONETHELESS HAVE DRAWN NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL CRITICISM FOR "EXCESSIVE ZEAL."

(THE PARA WILL THEN READ): WHILE ROMAN CATHOLICISM IS NO LONGER THE STATE RELIGION, ITS ROLE AS THE DOMINANT ONE OCCASIONALLY GIVES RISE TO PROBLEMS - SOME OVERT, OTHERS SUBTLY SOCIETAL. SUBSEQUENT TO A SERIES OF CHURCH CONSULTATIONS WITH POLITICAL LEADERS PRIOR TO MAY 2001 ELECTIONS, PRESIDENT CARLO AZEGLIO CIAMPI UNDERLINED THE SECULAR NATURE OF THE STATE AND THE CONSTITUTION'S EXPLICIT SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE. RESPONDING TO THE POPE'S JANUARY 2002 CALL FOR CATHOLIC JURISTS TO BOYCOTT DIVORCE CASES, JUSTICE MINISTER ROBERTO CASTELLI HIGHLIGHTED THAT JUDGES CANNOT EXERCISE "CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION" IN DISCHARGING THEIR DUTIES. IN JUNE 2002, PARLIAMENT PASSED A VATICAN-INSPIRED, RESTRICTIVE ASSISTED FERTILITY BILL THAT DREW SUPPORT FROM CATHOLIC LEGISLATORS ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM (AND WHICH SECULAR CONSERVATIVES AND COMMUNISTS JOINED TO OPPOSE). THE CONTINUING PRESENCE OF CATHOLIC SYMBOLS, SUCH AS CRUCIFIXES, WHICH MAY BE FOUND HANGING ON COURTROOM OR GOVERNMENT OFFICE WALLS, HAS DRAWN CRITICISM AND HAS BEEN THE OBJECT OF LAWSUITS. IN APRIL 2000, THE COURT OF CASSATION RULED IN FAVOR OF A SCHOOLTEACHER WHO ASSERTED THAT CRUCIFIXES SHOULD NOT BE PRESENT AT VOTING SITES MAINTAINED BY A SECULAR STATE. ATTEMPTS BY INDIVIDUAL TEACHERS TO REMOVE CRUCIFIXES FROM THE CLASSROOM, IN DEFERENCE TO MUSLIM STUDENTS, NONETHELESS HAVE DRAWN NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL CRITICISM FOR "EXCESSIVE ZEAL."  
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